

## Social Media in Kenya

Social media is thriving in Kenya, and is increasingly being used for political purposes leading up to the 2012 presidential election. Despite limited internet connectivity in the country (10% of the population were estimated to be internet users in 2009), there are millions of Kenyans on Facebook and Twitter, the two leading social media websites. Most of the candidates for the presidential election have twitter or Facebook pages with tens of thousands of followers, as do the larger media organizations, the Kenyan military, and the Somali Islamic militant organization Al-Shabaab.

Social media has been demonstrated to have the potential to play a positive role in shaping Kenyan politics. For example, the finance minister used Facebook, Twitter, Google Docs and Scribd to solicit public opinion on what to include in the country's budget in 2010/2011. Furthermore, during Kenya's ballot initiative to adopt a new constitution, social media was used to monitor the election as citizens shared tweets and text messages to report security issues, hate speech, and ballot problems. It has also been argued that social media enabled citizens to interact and share information during a media ban in the post-election violence in 2007.

On the other side, the potential for using social media in a negative way should not be understated. Just as radio has been used in the past as a tool to spread ethnic hatred, social media is vulnerable to similar use by those seeking to send a message of intolerance.

The following is a snapshot of the major political, military, and media figures and organizations that are active on Twitter and Facebook in Kenya.

### Twitter Wars – Kenyan Military & Al Shabaab

Major Emmanuel Chirchir - Kenya Military Spokesman  
10,184 followers

- Dec 9: #operationlindanchi Message to Al Shabaab. Time is up-surrender, Flee from Somalia, You have no plans for somalia people, TFG will prevail.
- Nov 12: On 12 November at 11:30 pm the KDF and TFG while on patrol duty bumped into an Al Shebab camp, shot dead nine of them

Al-Shabaab Press Office

10,429 followers (just joined twitter on Dec 7)

Eric Jospe

December 11, 2011

- Dec 9: @MajorEChirchir 50,000 Ethiopian troops couldn't pacify Somalia; you think a few disillusioned & disinclined Kenyan boys are up to the task?
- Dec 9: @DianaNTaylor what's beyond abhorrence is the collective Western Crusade against Islam of which you seem quite blasé about if not supportive

### Kenyan Politicians – Facebook & Twitter

Uhuru Kenyatta – Deputy Prime Minister, Presidential candidate & ICC suspect

Twitter: 23,732 followers

- Nov 11: On an ESP evaluation tour of Narok County. Making stops at Gare Nkareta Sec. School, Juakali sheds in Narok Town and Nkorinkorr Sec. School
- Sept 19: About to board the plane as I head to The Hague. God bless you all and God bless Kenya.

Facebook: 127,016 followers

Raila Amolo Odinga - Prime Minister of Kenya, leading Presidential candidate

23,749 followers

- Dec 8: "The trust of the people in the leaders, reflects the confidence of the leaders in the people." Paulo Freire
- Nov 8: We should be willing to welcome all politicians, listen to them and judge them on the basis of what they have to offer. Anything short of this makes nonsense of our struggle for political pluralism.

Facebook: 71,148 followers

Martha Karua - MP for Gichugu Constituency, Presidential Candidate

39,678 followers

- Dec 9: @mizmarr by having appropriate policies and ensuring implementation in a timely manner. Do remember you vote counts
- Dec 5: Ar cowne plaza in panel discussing implementation of the constitution and we all agreed citizens vigilance must continue!

Facebook: 148,983 followers

Kalonzo Musyoka - Vice President and Minister of Home Affairs, Republic of Kenya.

6,248 followers

- Dec 1: Morning, I will be doing a live stream today, please post your questions with the hashtag #VPstream. Will address key questions.
- Nov 6: My 2012th tweet is to remind you that tribalism is our biggest enemy. Love thy neighbor as the bible commands

Facebook - 18,445 followers

William Ruto – MP, Presidential Candidate & ICC Suspect

Twitter: 1,219 followers (not active)

Facebook: 51,907 followers

## **Kenyan Media - Twitter**

NTV Kenya - 38,950 followers

Daily Nation - 37,764 followers

Capital FM Kenya - 32,498 followers

The Standard - 18,641 followers